

THE READINESS OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL HEADS ASPIRING TO BECOME PRINCIPALS AND LEADERSHIP PREPARATION

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Abstract

This study was quantitative-correlational in design which aimed to find out the significant relationship and influence of leadership preparations on the readiness of the school heads to manage the school resources and school operations. The data were gathered through validated survey questionnaire. There were 35 school heads from elementary and secondary schools and these school heads are aspiring for principal positions in the Department of Education. The data were analyzed with the use of both descriptive and inferential statistics.

The results revealed that the extent of leadership preparations in terms of place and the experiential component, people and relationships, system, entrepreneurial service, and professionalism, and self-care and well-being is extensive; and the school heads are ready in managing school operations and resources in terms of records management, and always ready in financial management, management of school facilities and equipment, management of staff, and school safety. Furthermore, the school heads' leadership is significantly correlated to readiness in managing school operations and resources in terms of records management, and always ready in financial management, management of school facilities and equipment, management of staff, and school safety.

The readiness of managing school records is significantly affected by the preparation in self-care and well-being; financial management is influenced by preparations in system, entrepreneurial service, and professionalism, and self-care and well-being; readiness in managing school operations and resources in terms of school facilities and equipment is affected by readiness in system, entrepreneurial service, and professionalism; and both staff management and school safety are predicted by preparations on self-care and well-being.

Keywords: Leadership preparations, school management of resources, readiness to school management, managing school operations, quantitative method, Philippines.

1. INTRODUCTION

School principals are well-rounded individuals who could effectively encourage and channel collaborative efforts of school stakeholders to achieve the target goal especially quality learning process and outcome. Principals are also capable of exploiting available data necessary for decision making. There are a lot of realities that principals need to face. It is therefore imperative that those who are aspiring for principals are exposed to the real situations, dilemmas and many aspects of school governance (Spillane & Lee, 2013).

Preparations towards effective principal should be coherent and systematic based on the professional standards of the profession and the position. Day and Sammons (2014) emphasized that for a successful school leadership, one needs to have in-depth understanding of leadership trends, principal's roles, duties and responsibilities; and must be engaged in professional development focusing on leadership skills.

One of the areas in the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH) is Managing School Operations and Resources emphasizing the role of school heads in the management of the school systems and processes. This area highlights the school heads' commitment in ensuring efficiency, effectiveness, and fairness in discharging functions towards maximizing organizational health. Expectedly, "school heads understand and implement laws, policies, guidelines, and issuances that relate to the management of human, financial, and material resources. They should provide support in establishing a culture of transparency and accountability in the continuous delivery of basic education services".

The Division of Cotabato, one of the divisions in DepEd Region XII, assign school heads who are not yet full-fledged principals since only few are qualified to take the positions due to the requirements in getting the plantilla position. Hence, school heads who are

technically holding Teacher I, Teacher II and Teacher III positions are taking the roles of the principals for many elementary schools in the division. However, these school heads as principal aspirants after gaining the eligibility requirements will be able to secure the principal position. Hence, their preparation is necessary not only to gain credentials but also to practice the necessary leadership domains mandated in the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH).

This study was conducted to describe the preparations of the elementary school heads and their readiness in Managing School Operations and Resources based on the standards expected of them. Based on the literature reviewed, the researcher has not come across studies related to this topic in the Philippine setting. Hence, this gap in knowledge provided the direction for this research.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study aimed to find out the relationship of the leadership preparations and the readiness of the elementary school heads aspiring for principal positions.

Specifically, it aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the extent on quality of leadership preparations of the respondents in term of place and the experiential component; people and relationships; system, entrepreneurial service, and professionalism; and self-care and well-being?
2. What is the level of the respondents' readiness in managing school operations and resources in terms of records, financial, school facilities and equipment, staff, and school safety?
3. Is there significant relationship between the respondents' preparations and the level of readiness in managing school operations and resources?
4. Is there significant influence of the respondents' preparation and the level of readiness in managing school operations and resources?

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was anchored on the two frameworks which have been particularly helpful to examine principal preparation. Wildy and Clarke (2008) in Australia developed a framework of principal preparation based on place, people, system, and self in principal preparation. In a similar manner, Webber and Scott (2013) suggested five 'principles for principal preparations': "maintain a primary focus on principal as professional; include formal, informal, and experiential components; foster ability to develop relationships and navigate multiple allegiances; instill capacity to balance entrepreneurial exercising of power with accountability for the provision of service; and include realistic engagement with stressors of leadership and facilitate sustainable strategies for self-care and well-being".

On the other hand, the framework for the readiness of the school heads is based on the framework of Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH). The PPSSH defines professional standards that constitute a

quality school head. It shall serve as a public statement of professional accountability of school heads. It sets out what school heads are expected to know, be able to do, and value as they progress in their profession. It provides a common language for high-impact leadership expected of school heads to guide individual professional reflections, as well as professional discussions among educational leaders and other stakeholders, and to inform the provision of professional learning and development for school heads.

PPSSH emphasizes building and strengthening a network of stakeholders for school and people effectiveness. This principle requires school heads to "build and strengthen a network of organizational supports—the professional capacity of teachers and staff, the professional community in which they learn and work, family and community engagement, and effective, efficient management and operations of the school" (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015). PPSSH reflects the understanding of problems and issues at the school and the need to address them. This principle states that school heads are expected to reflect on the pervasive needs and/or concerns of learners, teachers, parents, community, and other stakeholders in order to address them effectively.

3. METHODS

This study makes use of quantitative methods particularly the descriptive-correlation. Quantitative research involves measuring variables and testing relationships between variables in order to reveal patterns, correlations, or causal relationships (Leavy, 2017). Descriptive studies entail describing the variables and the relationships that occur naturally between and among them.

This study provides descriptions of the preparations of the school heads and their perceived readiness as independent and dependent variables respectively. The relationship of these variables were also be investigated; hence, the use of descriptive-correlation design. The validated survey questionnaire was given to the respondents. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze and interpret the data gathered.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Leadership Preparations

The extent of leadership preparations in terms of place and the experiential component is extensive. This means, aspiring principals are often preparing themselves to understand, gain knowledge and learn about the context of the school and how they could possibly adapt to the new context of the school they will soon be assigned as principal. As underscored by Wildy and Clarke (2008), it is important that the school leaders have knowledge and understanding of the context so they will understand the complexities of managing a school. Pinar (2014) pointed out that 'understanding the particularity of place is vital.

Leadership preparations in terms of people and relations is also extensive as they often engage themselves in activities related to people and relationships. Findings of the study implied that school heads are preparing on things related to dealing with poorly performing staff; handling numerous and complex interactions on a day-to day basis

with diverse stakeholders; and other interpersonal and political dimension of the principal's role.

The extent of the leadership preparations in terms of system, entrepreneurial service, and professionalism is also extensive. This means the school heads are engaged in activities related to system, entrepreneurial service, and professionalism often. The results implied that the school heads are preparing for their duties and responsibilities to be soon full-fledge principals. They engage in preparations related to dealing with the authorities in the system; preparing paper works, dealing with complex and dense bureaucracies, regulations, policies, and correspondence; professional ethics and values; use of their power for the sake of school and community. Nicholson, Harris-John, and Schimmel (2005) posited that principals should be engaged in the kinds of professional development activities so they are acquainted with rules and policies to better discharge their duties and responsibilities.

Leadership preparations in terms of self-care and well-being is at extensive level. The aspiring principals prepare themselves in the aspects of maintaining work-life balance; developing resilience to reassert their self-confidence; and self-efficacy, and ability to manage competing pressures. Wildy and Clarke (2008) assert the school leaders should develop resilience to reassert their self-confidence and self-efficacy, and ability to manage competing pressures.

2. Readiness in Managing School Operations and Resources

Results reveal that the aspiring principals are ready in managing school operations and resources in terms of records management. They are also highly ready in the aspect of financial management like allocation, procurement, disbursement and liquidation aligned with the school plan; and other related activities in managing finances of the school.

Aspiring principals also claimed they are highly ready on school management particularly in the aspect of managing school facilities and equipment. The same readiness level is also manifested in the aspect of managing school staff. They demonstrate knowledge and skills in applying the laws, policies, guidelines and issuances based on the needs of the school when managing the personnel.

Furthermore, in managing school operations and resources in terms of school safety, the aspiring principals are ready. They perceived themselves to have enough knowledge and skills in managing the school safety since they can employ the necessary laws, policies, guidelines and issuances on managing school safety for disaster preparedness, mitigation and resiliency in ensuring continuous delivery of instruction.

3. Relationship of Leadership Preparations and Readiness in Managing

School Operations and Resources

The results revealed that all dimensions of leadership preparations are correlated with the level of readiness in managing school operations and resources. Place and the

experimental component is significantly linked to the readiness in managing school operations and resources in terms of records management, financial management, management of school facilities and equipment, management of staff, and school safety. It can be deduced from the result that school heads prepare for their principal position in the future and they do so by understanding the situation of the current school they are assigned. They also learn lessons on how the needs of the learners are being addressed in that school. This means, their current assignment is helping them learn the duties and responsibilities of principals particularly on handling or managing the records, finances, facilities and equipment, school personnel and safety of the school. School heads need to be trained on how to apply generic leadership knowledge and competences into applied situations which are customized according to the specific context in which their school resides (Brauckmann, Pashiardis, & Årlestig, 2020).

Moreover, the school heads' preparations in terms of people and relationship is also significantly related to their readiness in managing school operations and resources only in the aspects of records management, financial management, management of staff, and school safety. The results implied that school heads who are preparing themselves for the duties and responsibilities of dealing with the school stakeholders and in managing the day to day activity of the school in relation to such, are also ready in managing the records, finances, personnel and school safety. These aspects in school operations involve the stakeholders of the school. The results imply further that if the school heads are prepared on how to deal with the stakeholders, they are also ready in managing the school. As explained by Spillane and Anderson (2014), aspiring principals need to prepare on how they have to deal with diverse stakeholders of the school.

Leadership preparations in terms of system, entrepreneurial service, and professionalism is also significantly related to readiness in managing school operations and resources. It can be gleaned from the result that when the school heads are prepared by having imbibed the knowledge and skills in dealing with the school authorities, preparing paper works, and dealing with complex bureaucracies, and knowledge about professional ethics and values, they are also ready in managing the school operations particularly the records, finances, school facilities and school safety. In managing these aspects of the school, school heads also need knowledge and skills of the school heads about the school system and professionalism. Lastly, the preparations of the school heads in terms of self-care and well-being is also significant in the readiness of the school heads in managing school operations and resources. The findings implied that when the school heads are prepared with the kind of life they have as school principals (such as dealing with stress and having work-balance), this has something to do with their readiness to manage the school records, finances, facilities, personnel and school safety. Scott and Webber (2008) affirm that principals need to learn how to care for themselves and well-being since they are bound to face stressful activities in school.

Table 1. Relationship between leadership preparations and readiness in managing school operations and resources

			Records	Financial	Social Facilities and Equipment	Staff	School Safety
Spearman's rho	Place and the Experimental Component	Correlation Coefficient	.580*	.559**	.533**	.474*	.410*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.003	.005	.014	.038
	People and Relationship	Correlation Coefficient	.520*	.449*	.375	.503*	.629*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.007	.021	.059	.009	.001
	System Entrepreneurial System	Correlation Coefficient	.613*	.653**	.649**	.525*	.415*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.000	.000	.006	.035
	Self-Care and Wellbeing	Correlation Coefficient	.693*	.793**	.624**	.584*	.457*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.001	.002	.019

** Highly significant

* significant at 5%

1. Influence Leadership Preparations and Readiness in Managing School Operations and Resources

Leadership preparation significantly influenced the level of readiness in managing school operations and resources in terms of records management ($F = 19.453$; $Prob=0.000$). Further, the data revealed that level of readiness in managing school operations and resources in terms of records management is influenced by leadership preparation at 78.7% while the remaining 21.3% is due to factors not included in the study. In particular, self-care and well-being is considered as the best predictor of the readiness in managing school operations and resources in terms of records management. This means, the way the school heads handle records of the school is influenced by their preparations of being aware about themselves and having self-efficacy and ability to handle work-life balance. In the context of the school heads, they need to prepare volumes of reports and the need to be skilful in managing their activity so as not to deprive themselves from rests.

Table 2. Influence of the respondents' preparation on the readiness in managing school operations and resources in terms of **Records Management**

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-.364	.544		-.668	.511
	Place and the Experimental Component	.288	.268	.254	1.074	.295
	People and Relationship	.006	.204	.006	.029	.977
	System Entrepreneurial System	.534	.301	.478	1.771	.091
	Self Care and Well-being	.824	.311	.650	2.648*	.015

$R^2 = 0.787$

$F = 19.453^{**}$ Prob = 0.000

Leadership preparation has significant influence on the readiness in managing school operations and resources in terms of financial management ($F = 40.880$; $Prob=0.000$). Also, the data revealed that the variability in the readiness in managing school operations and resources in terms of financial management is attributed by leadership preparations at 88.6% while the remaining 11.4% is attributed by factors which are not included in the investigation. Among the dimensions of leadership preparations, only system, entrepreneurial service, and professionalism; and self-care and well-being are best predictors of readiness in managing school operations and resources in terms of financial management. As per Weber et al. (2014), principal preparations are reflective of their knowledge about the directives, policies related to professional commitment. Similarly, the preparations of the school heads in terms of self-care and well-being is also influential to their readiness in managing the school financial resources. This means, when school heads are aware of the things relative to their well-being and that they could apply work balance, they can also better perform their duties and responsibilities related to financial management as this is one of the roles of the school heads which might give them challenges when not properly managed.

Table 3. Influence of the respondents' preparation on the readiness in managing school operations and resources in terms of **Financial Management**

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-.619	.416		-1.489	.151
	Place and the Experimental Component	.299	.205	.253	1.463	.158
	People and Relationship	.053	.156	-.048	.339	.738

	System Entrepreneurial System	.612	.230	.525	2.658*	.015
	Self Care and Well-being	.929	.238	.701	3.908*	.001

$R^2 = 0.886$; $F = 40.880^{**}$; $Prob = 0.000$

The leadership preparations of the school heads is significantly influential to their readiness in managing school operations and resources in terms of school facilities and equipment as revealed in the statistical results of $F = 28.532$; $Prob = 0.000$. Among the dimensions in the leadership preparations, only system, entrepreneurial service, and professionalism is considered as the best predictor. This means, school heads' are prepared to deal with the authorities in the system; and to deal with the complex and dense bureaucracies, regulations, policies, and correspondence, they are also ready to manage the school operations since these are also governed by laws and policies. School heads who are prepared to make use of their power for the sake of school and community can also manage the school facilities effectively. As explained by Wildy and Clarke (2008), principals interact with educational authorities to find their way through often complex and dense bureaucracies, regulations, policies, electronic correspondence, and the like.

Table 4. Influence of the respondents' preparation on the readiness in managing school operations and resources in terms of **School Facilities and Equipment**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	-.304	.483		-.630	.535
Place and the Experimental Component	.302	.237	.257	1.273	.217
People and Relationship	.039	.181	.035	.214	.832
System Entrepreneurial System	.902	.267	.779	3.377**	.003
Self Care and Well-being	.549	.276	.418	1.992	.060

$R^2 = 0.845$; $F = 28.532^{**}$; $Prob = 0.000$

The readiness in managing school operations and resources in terms of management of staff is also influenced by leadership preparations ($F = 16.838$; $Prob = 0.000$) as shown in table 5. However, among the indicators of leadership readiness, only Self care and well-being serves as the best predictor of readiness in managing school operations and resources in terms of management of staff. This means, when the school heads are prepared to face the challenges they have at work and when they have self-efficacy and positive well-being, they are also ready to deal with the personnel in the school.

Table 5. Influence of the respondents' preparation on the readiness in managing school operations and resources in terms of **Management of staff**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	.453	.620		.731	.473
Place and the Experimental Component	.234	.305	-.192	.768	.451
People and Relationship	.130	.232	.114	.558	.583
System Entrepreneurial System	.420	.343	.349	1.224	.235
Self Care and Well-being	.843	.354	.617	2.378*	.027

$R^2 = 0.762$; $F = 16.838^{**}$; $Prob = 0.000$

As shown in table 6, managing school operations and resources in terms of school safety is also significantly influenced by leadership preparations ($F = 23.857$; $Prob = 0.000$). The best predictor of readiness in managing school operations and resources in terms of school safety is best predicted by leadership preparations on people and relationship. This implied that when school heads are prepared in establishing good relationship with stakeholders, they are also ready in managing the school safety. School heads work with the stakeholders in ensuring the safety of the school and to better facilitate the academic instruction. Hence, they need to be prepared for such tasks. Kisanas, Ware, and Arias (2004) highlighted that there is a need for leaders to ensure that they work hand in hand with the stakeholders in order to ensure safety of the school.

Table 6. Influence of the respondents' preparation on the readiness in managing school operations and resources in terms of **School Safety**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	-.370	.548		-.675	.507
Place and the Experimental Component	-.326	.270	-.263	-1.209	.240
People and Relationship	.558	.205	.482	2.721*	.013
System Entrepreneurial System	.511	.303	.418	1.683	.107
Self Care and Well-being	.422	.313	.304	1.346	.193

$R^2 = 0.820$

$F = 23.857^{**}$

$Prob = 0.000$

5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Results of the study show that the leadership preparations of the school heads in terms of place and the experiential component, people and relationships, system, entrepreneurial service, and professionalism, and self-care and well-being are significantly linked to the school heads readiness in managing school operations and resources in terms of records management, financial management, management of school facilities and equipment, management of staff, and management of school safety. Furthermore, the level of readiness in school management in the aspect of managing school records is significantly affected by the preparation in self-care and well-being; financial management is influenced by preparations in system, entrepreneurial service, and professionalism, and self-care and well-being; readiness in managing school operations and resources in terms of school facilities and equipment is affected by readiness in system, entrepreneurial service, and professionalism; and both staff management and school safety are predicted by preparations on self-care and well-being.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that aspiring school principals are preparing themselves in managing school operations and resources. Managing the school and become a full-fledged principal entails preparation in different aspects of school management. Their preparations predict the kind of management they will likely practice when they become principals in a particular school context of which they have no prior knowledge about the place, the people and the community where the school is located; hence, their knowledge and understanding of the laws, policies and guidelines are all vital for them to effectively function in the position.

Recommendations

Based on the results, the following are recommended:

1. school heads who are aspiring for principal position should continue to strengthen their leadership preparations since as reflected in the results, the school heads are extensively preparing in the aspects of place and the experiential component, people and relationships, system, entrepreneurial service, and professionalism, and self-care and well-being;
2. school heads should maintain their readiness level in managing school operations and resources in the aspects of records management, financial management, management of school facilities and equipment, management of staff, and school safety;
3. the school supervisors and full-fledged principals in the division may continue to guide the aspiring principals for them to maintain their readiness in managing the school;
4. future researchers may conduct the following researches:
 - a. a qualitative study exploring the experiences of the neophyte school heads in managing the school;
 - b. a quantitative study investigating other factors affecting the readiness of the school heads in managing school operations which are not included in this study;

c. a mixed method study which will find out the school heads other strategies of preparations for principal positions, and their challenges and coping mechanisms in school management.

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